

39/88

REVIEWED by John W. DATE 39/88

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AIR POUCH

4. 5 Department of State

INFO:

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AM/ME-1

Amembassy BEIRUT

DATE: November 14, 1962

SUBJECT: U.S. Retention of Guantanamo Base
Is Difficult to Sell

Depciptel 884, November 10, 1962

TO authority to:

() CLASSIFY as QADR, QADR,
 () DOWNGRADE to 4, 2 or 1, QADR,
 () DECLASSIFY

In all honesty, the Embassy must report that the arguments marshalled in Depciptel 884 as to why the United States Navy should stay at Guantanamo are not very impressive in this part of the world. People here remember Suez too well, and later on Dhahran and Bizerte, where the world, including the United States, upheld the principle that nations have the sovereign right to ask that foreign bases be removed. Arguments of long-term treaties, unrepresentative governments, and the general usefulness to the world of such bases are of little avail. Middle Easterners, in particular are sceptical that in this day of long range aircraft and missiles there is any true American defence need served by a base only a hundred miles or so from United States shores.

The Embassy believes the only point in the reference telegram which may hold up here is that the subject of the Guantanamo base is a separate issue which is irrelevant to the fundamental issue in Cuba, i.e., the removal of the Soviet offensive threat. This argument, however, implicitly suggests that a day might come when the United States might conclude that Guantanamo is no longer necessary to Free World defence plans. It would be the Embassy's hope that such a determination could and would be made if and when the Castro regime disappears.

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Contents and Classification Approved by:

TRANSMITTER

Miley/30

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Beirut

Meanwhile, despite the formidability of the task, the Department may be assured that the Embassy will do its best, utilizing the substance in the reference telegram, to promote a favorable Lebanese disposition with regard to our Guantánamo base. Fortunately, there is not at present any great emotion in Lebanon on this issue.

Arnold

Arnold H. Meyer

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